

L. A. - HISTORY

27

# HISTORICAL LOS ANGELES

~~WEST LOS ANGELES~~

TWO WALKING TOURS  
OF  
EL PUEBLO DE LOS ANGELES  
THE PLAZA  
BUNKER HILL



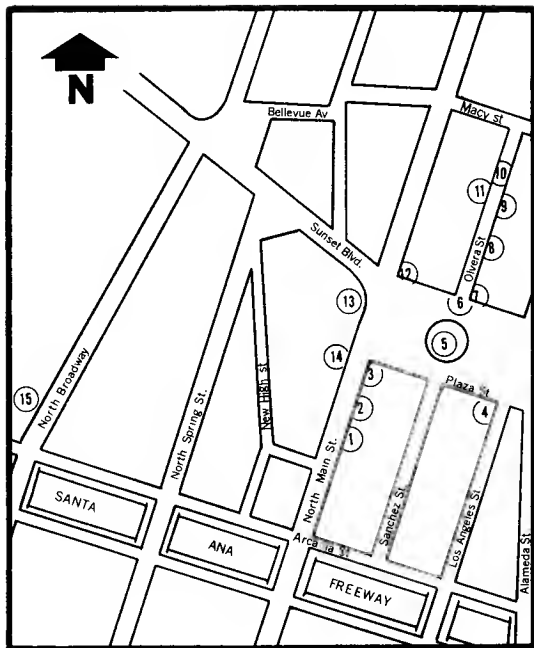
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Los Angeles, founded on September 4, 1781 by 44 settlers recruited from Sonora and Sinaloa in Mexico, still retains two main cultural and historical sites where you can be a part of the rich past of the City of the Angels. The Plaza de Los Angeles and the Bunker Hill area are a part of the old Pueblo and are recognized as having cultural and historical significance by city, county and state organizations. We hope you will leisurely walk these tours, and enjoy and absorb some of the history of our City.

## THE PLAZA

1. **MASONIC TEMPLE** 416 North Main Street (corner of Main Street and Santa Ana Freeway). Built in 1858 by Masonic Lodge No. 42, this was the first lodge building in Southern California. The Temple has been restored and you may go upstairs to the second floor and see a display of Masonic memorabilia dating back to the 18th century. Open from 12 noon to 5 p.m. Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

2. **MERCED THEATRE** 420 & 422 North Main Street. Designed by Ezra F. Kyser, the Merced Theatre was one of the earliest theatres in Los Angeles. It was built next to the Pico House and opened early in 1871, the year after the Pico House was completed. It was named for Mercedes Garcia, wife of the builder, William Abbott.

The theatre is on the second floor of the three-story structure. Doors connected the theatre directly with the Pico House for the accommodation of guests. Originally there were four boxes on each wall, furnished with red plush curtains hung on gold rings. Mr. Abbott and his family lived on the third floor and he operated a furniture store on the first floor. Restoration plans include the use of the theatre.

3. **PICO HOUSE** 430 North Main Street. Designed by Ezra F. Kyser, the Pico House was the first 3-story building and, at the time of its opening in 1870, the finest hotel in Los Angeles. It cost Pio Pico, the last Mexican Governor of California, and his brother Andres, upwards of \$100,000 to build and furnish this building, which contained the luxuries of bathtubs, velvet carpets, gaslights, and lace curtains, plus a barber shop, billiard room, and Wells Fargo & Company express office.

In 1892 the name was changed to the National Hotel. Since Pico's day it has been operated by a variety of owners—but restoration plans propose use of Pico House as a period hotel.

Just East is the Garnier Building, which housed stores and offices in early days. It, too, is being restored for similar use.

The preceding three buildings are undergoing massive reconstruction as part of the Pueblo de Los Angeles State Historical Monument. You can still view what is going on through the fence openings. A completion date cannot be set at this time.

4. **OLD PLAZA FIRE HOUSE** 134 Plaza Street (corner Plaza and Los Angeles Streets). Now completed, the restored Fire House was built in 1884 to house Engine Company No. 1. On display is one of the first fire engines used in Los Angeles, built in 1892 for the Chicago Columbia Exposition. Notice the brass firemen's pole and bell system. It is open Mondays through Thursdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.; Fridays through Sundays 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. No admission charge.

5. **STATUES** In the center of Plaza Park with its sculptured shrubbery and beautiful kiosk, is a statue of Governor Felipe de Neve, who founded the Pueblo under royal decree from Carlos III of Spain. A statue of Father Junipero Serra, founder of the California Missions, may be seen across the street on the east side of the Plaza.

6. **OLVERA STREET** Located off Sunset Boulevard near Main Street and marked by a large carved wooden cross, this is one of the oldest streets in Los Angeles. It was named for Judge Agustin Olvera whose adobe home faced the Plaza at the south end of the street. The 70-odd stalls and shops are open about 10 a.m. everyday. In them you can buy leather goods, candles, pottery, glass blown objects, silver jewelry, pinatas, Mexican candy, pastries, and souvenirs. There are good restaurants featuring Mexican food—also, you may visit small "puestos" or stands, where delicious taquitos and enchiladas are prepared.

Today's Olvera Street is the product of an inspiration by the late Mrs. Christine Sterling who, in 1926, evolved the idea of converting what was an unsanitary alley into a Mexican market place which, in a few years, became an outstanding tourist attraction.

7. **METHODIST CHURCH** 121 E. Sunset Boulevard. To the east of Olvera Street on Sunset Boulevard is the Methodist Church. Although built in 1929, it carries on the tradition of Mexican architecture and is open for Sunday services in Spanish at 9:30 a.m., 10 a.m., 11 a.m. and 7:30 p.m.

8. **AVILA ADOBE** 14 Olvera Street. This is the oldest existing house in Los Angeles. Though now only a portion remains, the original was considered a mansion when built in 1818 by Don Francisco Avila, one-time Mayor of the Pueblo of Los Angeles. During the American occupation in 1847, it housed Commodore Robert F. Stockton. Its walls are over 2½ feet thick, with 15 foot ceilings. The French doors were brought around the Horn by ship. It is now a museum, open every day from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Admission is 25 cents for adults, 10 cents for children.

9. **LATIN AMERICAN TRADE MART** 24 Olvera Street. A fine selection of imports from Mexico and Latin America are displayed here. Also, the little "Plaza de las Americas" where you can see the flags of all the Latin American countries. El Paseo Inn occupies part of the building. Open daily from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

10. **ZANJA MADRE** While wandering down Olvera Street, notice the diagonal strip of red brick pavement which identifies the location of the "Mother Ditch," which the early settlers dug to bring water from the Los Angeles River to their fields and homes. At the north end of the street is a hand-hewn watering trough.

11. **LA CASA PELANCONI** (Casa La Golondrina Mexican Cafe) 33-35 Olvera Street. One of the first, and possibly the finest, of the early brick houses built in Los Angeles. Built in 1855 by Guiseppe Covacichi, an Austro-Italian gentleman for a "bodega" or wine cellar below stairs and with living quarters above. Among several successive owners was Jose Mascarel who was Mayor of Los Angeles in the Civil War period. Antonio Pelanconi, Italian gold miner, purchased the place about 1865 and married Isabel Ramirez, granddaughter of the owners of the Avila Adobe across the street.

La Casa Pelanconi was remodeled in 1929 and is now the Casa La Golondrina Mexican Cafe.

12. **BANK OF AMERICA** Walking west along Sunset Boulevard, you will see the Pueblo de Los Angeles Branch of the Bank of America which houses a large collection of Mexican arms. Occupying a third of the old Simpson Building, the bank invites visitors to drop in and view the pistols and rifles from Pancho Villa's army, and machetes used by Zapata.

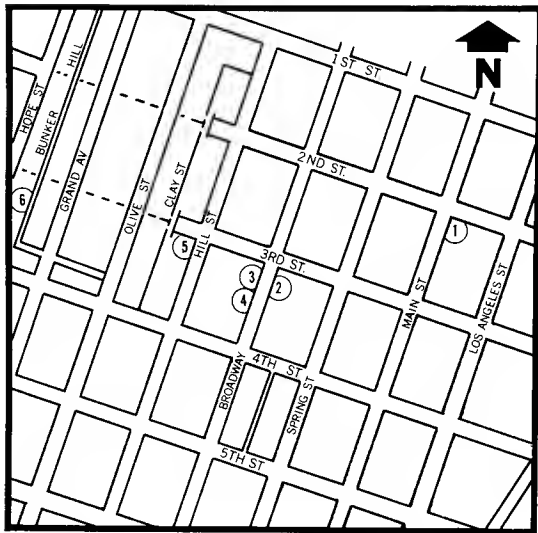
13. **OLD MISSION PLAZA CHURCH** Nuestra Senora La Reina de Los Angeles ("Our Lady Queen of the Angels") is located at 100 West Sunset Boulevard, and is recognized as the oldest established church in continuing use in the City. The original 18 x 24 foot chapel was started in 1819 and dedicated in 1822. Ex-pirate Joseph Chapman helped in the building. Signs and pictures in the courtyard depict the history of the church. Masses begin at 5 a.m. on Sundays until 12:15 p.m.—also at 5 p.m. & 7 p.m. but you are welcome to enter the church at any time.

14. **SITE OF THE FIRST CEMETERY** 521 North Main Street. Adjacent to the Plaza Church, extending 50 feet or more southerly and 220 feet westerly to New High Street, this site was the first graveyard of the City of Los Angeles from 1823 to 1844 and possibly inherits the remains of some of the Christian aboriginal inhabitants of Yang-Na, the Gabrielino Village, as well as those of early Spanish and Mexican settlers.

The site is presently a parking lot owned and operated under the jurisdiction of the County of Los Angeles. The County Board of Supervisors has agreed to assist the City in restoring the old cemetery grounds when the land is no longer needed for a court parking lot.

15. **FORT MOORE PIONEER MEMORIAL** From the corner of Main and Arcadia Streets (overpassing the Santa Ana Freeway) look to the west toward Hill Street to the Fort Moore Pioneer Memorial.

Fort Moore, no longer in existence, was completed by members of the Mormon Battalion which arrived in Los Angeles in March of 1847. It was named to honor Captain Benjamin D. Moore who died in the battle of San Pasqual. The huge sculptured panel now in place was dedicated on July 4, 1958 as a memorial to pioneer troops and settlers.



## BUNKER HILL

1. **ST. VIBIANA'S CATHEDRAL** 114 East Second Street. The somewhat plain exterior of this church belies its astonishingly beautiful interior. Work on this building began in 1871 with consecration taking place April 30, 1876. Designed by Ezra F. Kyser, who was later assisted by W. J. Mathews, the building was modeled after the Puerto de San Miguel Church in Barcelona, Spain, and is of the Spanish Baroque revival style. Until the late 1880's it was the largest church building in the City of Los Angeles.

Reposing in a niche above the marble and onyx high altar are the relics of St. Vibiana, child saint, who is said to have lived in the third century. These remains were reputedly recovered from Roman Catacombs along the Appian Way by Pope Pius IX in 1853 and brought here by Bishop Thaddeus Amat, first Bishop of Los Angeles. They are enclosed in a gilt and plate glass sarcophagus and exposed on feast days.

So as not to interfere with Masses, your visit to the Cathedral should be during the following times: Monday thru Saturday: 8:30 to 11:30 a.m.; 1 p.m. to 4:45 p.m. Sunday: 1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

2. **BRADBURY BUILDING** 304 South Broadway. The sandstone and brick exterior of this five-story office building is very deceiving. Architect, George Herbert Wyman, concentrated his creativity on the interior court with open corridors, ornamental rails, stairs and open cage elevators. Interior forms rise like flowers to the all-embracing source of light—its glass roof.

It is interesting to note that George Herbert Wyman, who was 32 when he designed the building, was without formal training in either architecture or engineering.

The Bradbury Building may be visited any day except Sunday.

3. Notice the Million Dollar Theatre at 307 South Broadway, which was built in 1918. Although somewhat obscured by a marquee, you can still see the ornate exterior. It now presents Spanish films and vaudeville acts.

4. **GRAND CENTRAL MARKET** 317 South Broadway. This enormous, picturesque, open-stall market is almost considered a historical landmark. With over 100 business establishments, it is a fascinating and rewarding trip to wander through the thousands of food items. Produce and foreign ingredients, especially, are a find, and most items sell at lower than average prices. Open 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday thru Saturday.

5. **ANGEL'S FLIGHT** Third and Hill Streets. This cable car line was built in 1901 by Colonel J. W. Eddy, and has often been called the "World's Shortest Railway". It served as the prime means of ascent for the then many residents of Bunker Hill. The two cars, "Olivet" and "Sinai", carry 32 passengers each at 5 cents a ride. They run at a 33% grade for the 315 feet up to Olive Street, the trip taking 50 seconds. The railroad is open from 7 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. daily.

6. **BUNKER HILL RESIDENCES** From the top of Angel's Flight, you can walk up the two blocks to view the two remaining examples of the exuberant era of the 1880's when Bunker Hill was an "exclusive" address. The residences are at 325 and 339 S. Bunker Hill Avenue. 325, known as "The Castle" is the last of the larger homes that once dominated the hill. 339 is an example of the classic style home of the turn-of-the-century period.

Just as, in future years, the adjacent now-modern Music Center complex and the fountain-surrounded high-rise Water & Power Building will be "mementos" of the past—so are these two Bunker Hill residences reminders of days when life proceeded at a slower pace, and there was more time for charm and graciousness.

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Each year special events held in the Plaza that the public may attend are:

**Nativity Scene: December 12-January 6.**

**Las Posadas: December 16-December 24.**

**Mardi Gras: Day before Ash Wednesday.**

**Blessing of the Animals: Easter Saturday.**

**Flower Day and Camera Day: Third Saturday in June.**

**City's Birthday Celebration: September 4.**